

**Testimony of Chuck Lippstreu, Michigan Agri-Business Association
House Committee on Commerce and Trade
October 24, 2017**

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, my name is Chuck Lippstreu and I am here on behalf of the Michigan Agri-Business Association. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of HB 5095.

Our association represents more than 400 businesses spanning the agricultural supply chain, and we fully support this proposal because it will modernize Michigan's ballast water regulations and once again enable many of our members to transport products by vessel.

The measure will modernize Michigan's ballast water policy and allow Michigan to embrace new technology to protect the Great Lakes from invasive species.

Specifically, HB 5095 will allow vessels to utilize technology approved by the U.S. Coast Guard to flush ballast water. This aligns our state's policy with the best practices embraced by the shipping industry and the Coast Guard. It will also align Michigan's policy with all other Great Lakes states and provinces.

This fixes a challenging situation that has had a significant effect on Michigan agriculture. Michigan's current ballast water restriction is the only one of its kind currently in place in the Great Lakes. No other state or province has such a restriction. The fact that Michigan has stood alone for years in limiting ballast water discharge has limited the results of our current, well-intentioned policy.

Right now, ships bypass our state altogether and take their business to other Great Lakes ports like the Port of Toledo. For our members, especially those that handle grain and other agricultural products, vessel transportation is off the table as an option, unless products are trucked to an out-of-state port, adding to shipping costs. And any increase in shipping cost is passed on to the farmer, reducing the amount they are paid for crops.

Embracing new technology, together with the U.S. Coast Guard, will give us real tools to protect against invasive species in a common-sense way – and it will put Michigan back on the map as a viable destination for oceangoing vessels, expanding options for agriculture and sparking economic development in communities across the Great Lakes.

We fully support HB 5095, and we support the use of technology accepted by the U.S. Coast Guard to protect the Great Lakes while sparking new economic opportunity.

###